Discover Haverford Welcomes *Ombra*



Imagine it's a Friday evening, and you've just had a long day of work. Wouldn't it be fantastic to enjoy some fresh Italian food and relax? Well, there's no need to worry, because Havertown's newest Italian restaurant, Ombra, is right nearby on Brookline Boulevard. You reach out to friends and make a plan and a reservation. With a bottle of Cabernet tucked in your elbow, you enter the inviting ambiance of Ombra, and the smells of fresh garlic and pasta greet you along with the sounds of laughter and chattering as you walk to the table to meet your friends. *Wow, this is just what I needed,* you think. And it really is. With its upscale Italian setting and fresh, flavorful, and beautifully-presented handmade dishes, Ombra is a restaurant rooted in family tradition and attention to detail that draws in patrons from Haverford Township and beyond.



Immigrating from Albania at just 16 years old, co-owner Julian Hublina has known good food ever since he could remember. He recalls, "My grandmother was an excellent cook. Unbelievable." As culinary expertise was already in the family, what made better sense than for Julian to become a chef as well? Once in Philadelphia, Julian started working in the restaurant industry, first in the dining room and then in the kitchen. He then landed a job at the Monte Carlo Living Room, one of the most well-known Italian fine dining restaurants at the time. Julian learned cooking techniques from the best, as the owners came from France, Italy, and Monaco. When he was ready to be on his own, Julian opened Langostino's in 2004, an upscale Italian restaurant located in South Philadelphia.

After living and working in Philadelphia for over twenty years, however, Julian was ready to transition from city life to the suburbs, first to Ardmore, then to Penn Wynne. The quiet residential life was just what he needed. When asked why he chose to open in Havertown, he says "I really like this area. I really liked this particular spot the moment I saw it. I was like wow, I love this. This street," and he saw it as an opportunity to try something new.

After two years of planning and preparation, Ombra officially opened on Halloween in 2025. For many who have dined there, Ombra's carefully planned menu is what stands out and keeps them coming back. The majority of the menu changes seasonally, and according to Julian, when a new



item is put on the menu, customers start ordering it right away. With the guidance of Chef Stephen Vassalluzzo, former owner of Caffe Casta Diva, it took over two months and a full kitchen staff to test recipes and prepare the menu. They put a high value on finding the best quality ingredients they can source. “We have a specialty farmer that brings us very nice stuff,” Julian says. Every dish contains many ingredients and shows the detailed care that is put in each one.

Ombra’s handmade pastas are their specialty and are made fresh every day. The most popular pasta dish, Malfadine Scampi, includes ingredients such as shrimp, crab, seasoned toasted bread crumbs, herbs, and preserved lemon. When they took the scampi off the menu with the change of seasons, there was so much outcry that it was returned to the menu within a week! Other popular dishes range from the Pear and Gorgonzola Salad to Branzino, all of which are crafted with many special ingredients. Julian emphasizes the idea of consistency, stating, “Every dish must be made exactly the same. I cannot produce one dish that has less sauce and one dish that has extra sauce. It has to taste identical."



Everything about the restaurant was built from scratch–even the brick walls were resurfaced. Julian and co-owner Elvis Berisha, had a vision of the restaurant as elegant and inviting and carefully planned every aspect of it. Besides the gorgeous interior decor with a subtle green theme, Julian’s plants both inside and out add to the atmosphere. Each of them are chosen and planted by Julian, something else he learned from his grandmother. He has been going to the same nursery for over twenty years, and also gets some of his plants from neighboring business, Plant Roots.

When asked about future plans, Julian answers “Right now my focus is here 100%.” For over two years, the owners and staff tirelessly built Ombra from the ground up. “It needed tender love and care…a big investment.” The meticulous design inside and out truly reflects what a place Ombra is, from its comfortable interior and lush plants to the curated menu. When you step into the restaurant, you genuinely feel at home. Kudos to Elvis, Julian, and Chef Stephen for their commitment to quality, consistency, and hospitality.

Ombra is open Wednesday through Sunday evenings, operating Wednesday and Thursday from 4:30-9:30 PM, Friday and Saturday from 4:30-10 PM, and Sunday from 4:30-9 PM. To learn more visit ombrabyob.com and follow their instagram @ombrabyob.

Thank you to Joel Perlish Photography for the photos at Ombra.